FLEXIBLE ACCULTURATION

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*"Flexibility" has become an important concept in studies of
globalization and transnationalism. Most academic discus-
sions fall into the literature of global capitalist restructuring:
e.g., Piore and Sabel's (1984) notion of flexible specialization
and David Harvey's concept (1991) of flexible accumulation.
These discussions are centered on economic production and
market logics. Theoretical discussions of flexibility about other
regimes of power — such as cultural reproduction, the nation-
state and family — are relatively insufficient. In this paper, I
explore the concept of "flexible acculturation," first proposed
by Jan Nederveen-Pieterse (2007), to show a cultural aspect of
transnational flexibility. I situate my discussion in the literature of
transmigration studies and define flexible acculturation as having
four important virtues: (1) it has diverse social players, rather
than just political and economic elites; (2) it refers to interac-
tions, not just differences; (3) it involves multiple processes; and
(4) it is not just about agency but also about social regulations.
These definitions help to explain why flexible acculturation is
different from other concepts that have been proposed. I further
argue that definitions of important social actors are contingent
on a specific set of flexible acculturation processes. Social ac-
tors discussed in this paper include governments, the public,
transmigrants, and women.*

"Flexibility" has become an important concept in studies of
globalization and transnationalism, especially after David Harvey's

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"Time, Space Compression" (1991). Most academic discussions of flexibility fall into the literature of global capitalist restructuring. For instance, contemporary modernization theorists and neoliberalists perceive the informal economy as a method that guarantees a flexible source of labor for economic growth. Post-Fordists discuss flexible production strategies (e.g., just-in-time) after the 1970s (Vallas 1999). Hirst and Zeitlin (1991), Piore and Sabel (1984), and Sabel (1982) use the idea of flexible specialization to describe the labor-issue in the era of Post-Fordism. Harvey and the followers (Elam 1990; Pietrykowski 1999; Vallas 1999) utilize the concept of "flexible accumulation," which also includes discussions about labor issues, especially the negative side of the market logics. Finally, feminists argue that core jobs of flexible specialization commonly correlated with skills, computers, technology, and mobile specialists are historically and socially constructed as masculine (Belussi 1992; Raasch 1992). These discussions of flexibility are centered on the regime of market and economic production. Discussions of flexibility about other regimes of power—such as the cultural reproduction, the nation-state and family—are relatively insufficient.

In this paper, I use the concept "flexible acculturation," proposed by Jan Nederveen-Pieterse (2007), as a theoretical framework to show a cultural aspect of transmigration processes. This cultural aspect mainly shows how different social groups utilize transnational opportunities to achieve their economic, political, or social goals. As a result, the idea of flexibility in transnationalism is extended into fields other than economics.

Elements of Flexible Acculturation

Nederveen-Pieterse uses the idea of flexible acculturation to replace flexible citizenship (Ong 1999) because the latter applies to only the Chinese elites. In this paper, I expand Nederveen-Pieterse's idea of flexible acculturation by identifying four important principles related to this concept and how it differs from many other terms that have been proposed in sociology, migration studies, and cultural studies. These principles include: flexible acculturation involves diverse social players so that it is different from the con-

cept of flexible citizenship; departing from notions of instrumental ethnicity, etc., flexible acculturation refers to interactions among different social groups; flexible acculturation indicates a set of processes which makes it dissimilar with the ideas of assimilation, melting pot, or multiculturalism; flexible acculturation is about both agency and social forces so that it is more comprehensive than the idea of acculturation in acculturation psychology.

Flexible Acculturation Involves Diverse Social Players

Flexible acculturation is different from Aihwa Ong's flexible citizenship (1999). Flexible citizenship is about the elite expatriate Chinese opportunism which means that flexible legal affiliations with multi-loci grant these Chinese elites opportunities to exercise multicultural flexibilities, to obtain benefits, and to avoid risks in different social systems. Flexible legal affiliation refers to strategies of holding multiple passports and choosing different locations for business, residency, etc. Since citizenship implies a legal affiliation between a government and the people, it is linked to the government and the peoplehood rather than other social agents or institutions, such as the state, the nation, or other social groups (Jackson 2001). Even though multiple legal affiliations increase available resources to perform multicultural flexibilities, they are not a precondition. For instance, most Taiwanese in China and illegal immigrants in other countries, who necessitate flexible cultural strategies in response to ethnic conflicts, do not have citizenship offered by the host societies. In contrast to the idea of flexible citizenship which is limited in its scope, flexible acculturation is broader because it can include not only the relationship between a government and its emigrants or immigrants, but also links between other kinds of social groups.

Flexible Acculturation is about Interactions between Social Groups

Flexible acculturation is different from instrumental ethnicity and instrumental identity (Ip, Inglis and Wu 1997; Rios 1992; Tseng 1999). The idea of "instrumental" is narrower than "flexible"

because the former is often strictly linked to the idea of market calculation while flexible acculturation is also related to other social aspects. Similarly, "ethnicity" and "identity" are narrower than "acculturation" because neither ethnicity nor identity represents processes of interactions among social groups.

Ethnicity indicates at least two groups of people because historically, the concept of "ethno" was developed by dominant groups to separate mainstream from marginal social groups (Nederveen-Pieterse 2007). The same logic applies to identity. Identity surges especially when conflicts or comparisons between groups occur (Comaroff 1996). However, ethnicity and identity as nouns often indicate difference or comparison and do not necessarily entail a two-way-traffic interaction between parties. On the other hand, the verb "to acculturate" denotes not only difference or comparison but also interaction. This type of interaction differs from that mentioned in the field of acculturation psychology because acculturation psychology is more about changing social positions of minorities after interacting with the dominant group. Instead, the concept of flexible acculturation suggests that transnational social fields provide opportunities for both dominant and marginal groups to flexibly exercise cultural strategies on other social groups. Therefore, processes of flexible acculturation shape not merely marginal social groups but also dominant social groups.

Flexible Acculturation as a Set of Processes

Flexible acculturation is different from some important concepts in studies of immigration, such as the melting pot thesis and multiculturalism. The melting pot thesis focuses on consensus and homogeneity while multiculturalism supports diversity and disagreement (Alba 1999; Glazer and Moynihan 1963; Steinberg 1989). Acculturation, on the other hand, is not only about results but also about processes. Since acculturation happens in multiple fields and is exercised by multiple social actors, it is problematic when scholars try to predict a singular result (e.g., assimilation or the melting pot). While assimilation might happen in one field, multiculturalism in another, or both, could happen simultaneously

and at various degrees. This is not to say that the variability of acculturation is occasional and unpredictable, because acculturation is institutional. Rather, flexible acculturation comprises a set of *complex processes* that can be predicted based on institutional influences from the intersection among the local, the national, the international, the transnational, and the global grounds.

Nederveen-Pieterse (2007:185, emphasis in original) points out that "Flexible acculturation is as old as the phenomenon of sub-cultures. . . . What is new is the *scope and degree* of multi-circuit identification." In the era of globalization and transmigration, people, information, culture, and businesses travel quickly, and so do conflicts and cooperation. Institutions and circumstances at different levels (local, national, etc.) further complicate the trans-national social fields. Hence, the variability of acculturation is more aggressive and the demand of flexibility in migration processes is higher than ever.

Flexible Acculturation is about Both Agency and Social Structure

Flexible acculturation differs from instrumental ethnicity or instrumental identity, etc. also because it recognizes both agency and social structure. Scholars who use the idea of instrumental ethnicity or instrumental identity tend to focus on forces from below and overlook power from above. On the other end, the field of acculturation psychology is more about a top-down approach because it often discusses the social positions of minorities through a mainstream lens (e.g., assimilation, separation, integration, and marginalization). Instead, flexible acculturation recognizes any social actors, either from above (capitalists, governments), from below (workers, social movements), or from any other social posi-tions of the spectrum. The interplay of multiple agents in flexible acculturation is conditioned by the agents' social positions, includ-ing their social power and resources.

Stating that flexible acculturation is about both agency and structure also implies that flexible acculturation processes should be situated at the intersection of functional and conflict theoretical paradigms. Flexible strategies serve as agency's functional means

in response to not only opportunities but also social tensions or structural regulations. For instance, the need to use instrumental ethnicities might suggest conflicts between ethnicities or institutional discriminations against certain ethnic groups. Another example is that increased flexibility of certain social groups (e.g., the husbands or the families) might indicate decreased flexibility of other social groups (e.g., the wives or the daughters) because the dominant groups have the power to enforce strategies to achieve their own flexibility. In L.H.M. Ling's work of "Global Hypermasculinity" (1999), P.C. Hsiung's "Living Rooms as Factories" (1996) and Thanh-Dam Truong's study (1999), there is a similar conclusion which suggests that the economic miracle of East Asia increases flexibility of the nation-states on expenses of women because the nation-states promote a gender order in production that favors men over women and encourages unpaid employment of women at home. In this logic, flexible acculturation is not only about liberation of certain social groups, but may have negative impacts on other social groups. Thus, to study flexibility, a researcher has to examine social regulations behind certain processes of flexible acculturation. A researcher should also recognize that the degree of flexibility each individual has differs because of a person's social position.

Social Actors in Flexible Acculturation

To study flexible acculturation processes requires the need to identify important social actors and their social positions. I prefer the term "social position" rather than "social role" to discuss the agency of social actors. This is because *role theory* (Merton 1957), which focuses on how people learn role expectations and then act according to those social rules, is more about social structure than about agency. Instead, *positioning theory* focuses on both agency and structure and states that people actively construct social positions in which they are situated (Berman 1999; Carbaugh 1999). Studies of social positions are situational analyses because social positions are shaped by historical and contemporary social contexts. Instead of putting too much emphasis on the uniqueness of each

empirical case, I aim to focus on the pattern shared by many cases. Transnational social fields offer more opportunities for different social groups.

Important social actors might differ according to each set of flexible acculturation processes. I focus on four social groups that are often presented in the transmigration literature: governments, civil societies, transmigrants, and women. I identify old and new focuses in academic discussions related to these four groups and argue that new discussions can provide us with examples of flexible strategies. In return, flexible acculturation serves as a concept to bring together these four bodies of discussions.

*The Government: From Controlled Regulation
to Flexible Regulation*

To talk about governmental strategies (whether they are "flexible" or not), one has to recognize the agency of governments. There is a long history about governmental regulations of migration. According to Hvidt (1975), the European governments had strict control on emigration before 1800, since emigration was considered a loss of the sending nations' resources. In 1921, the United States introduced the provision of immigration quotas, which created a precedent for many nation-states to pass anti-immigration laws geared at immigration rather than emigration. However, in migration studies before the 1990s, very few scholars attributed agency to the governments. These scholars followed dependency theory and focused on the negative effects of emigration from peripheral countries, and recommended that the peripheral governments take action to control emigration. These negative effects included asymmetric dependency of the periphery on the core, brain drain, social disintegration in the periphery, and social inequality between emigrants and the stayers in the peripheral countries (Khoshkish 1966; Watanabe 1969). For instance, the brain drain (or human capital flight) thesis argues that selective migration of educated people from the poor countries to the rich ones add up the unequal bond between countries because the host land enjoys the fruits of educated minds nurtured by exporters. These discussions influenced some peripheral

states to elevate the walls for the entry of foreign corporations and regulations of outward migration. The governments in the system of controlled regulation did not actively encourage processes of acculturation, which was the focus of the governments in flexible regimes.

Since the mid-1980s, the revival of neoclassical economics has underscored the positive influence of migration on economic development and has marginalized discussions that follow the line of dependency theory. It was not until the late 1990s that scholars began to notice again the social position of governments in migration processes. The discussions of governments in the migration literature reemerged alongside the discussions of the "reinvention of sovereignty thesis" in the literature of globalization that re-evaluates the agency and the flexible strategies of states and governments (Guarnizo and Smith 1998; Nederveen-Pieterse 2004). The general argument in the migration literature is that governments undergoing considerable out-migration have realized the importance of economic remittances of emigrants on the development of national economies and the nation's integration into the global system. These governments actively construct bifocal subjects and multiple identities in order to incorporate their emigrants into nation-building projects (Basch, Glick Schiller and Blanc 1994; Guarnizo 1998; Nagengast and Kearney 1990). As a result, the relation between transnational practices and a government or a state is not mutually exclusive, but constitutive. The situation is no longer "diasporic" since this term describes the continuing existence of a nation while the state or the government is absent (Abelmann and Lie 1995; Gilroy 1993). Instead, a better term is the deterritorialized nation-state since "there is no longer a diaspora because wherever its people go, their state goes too" (Basch, Glick Schiller, and Szaton Blanc 1994: 269). Studies about deterritorialized nation-states are different from the tradition of dependency theory. Discussions that follow the dependency theory usually focuses on what Sherman (1999) calls the states' "introverted incorporation of emigrants" that encourages capital inflow, prevents permanent settlement of its emigrants in other countries, and focuses on domestic politics (unemployment rate, brain drain, etc.). Instead, the transmigration literature argues

that governments and states are no longer merely the gatekeepers of political borders but actively launch projects to promote loyalties of migrants in order to serve the nationalistic or neocolonial interests of nation-states. The strategies of these governments and states are similar to what Sherman calls "state extension." This means that from the perspective of the governments, the matter is not much about domestic politics but about how the government uses national belonging as a strategy to obtain assistance from emigrants for global competition and dissemination. Acculturation thus becomes an important means of nationalist dissemination.

Even though there are significant differences between discussions of controlled regulations and flexible regulations, there are also similarities between them. One similarity is that both bodies concentrate on how governments can work for the people. For example, the discussions that follow the tradition of dependency theory suggest controlled regulations of emigration for the domestic national interests. The transmigration theorists propose flexible regulations for the national interests in the transnational social fields. The other similarity is that while both bodies of literature believe that the relationship between a government and its domestic citizenry is cooperative, they consider that the relationship between a government and other governments is competitive. In other words, divided applications of the theoretical paradigms coexist where the conflict paradigm is used to discuss the competitions between different governments and the functional paradigm is employed to describe the cooperation between each government and its citizenry.

These similarities point to a shortage in the existing discussions in the migration studies: many scholars neglect that conflicts might also exist between a government and its local citizens. One exception is Aihwa Ong's ideas of "graduated sovereignty" (1999, 2000, and 2006) as well as her notion of "neoliberalism as exception" (2006), which argues that in their flexible regulation strategies, some governments fail to take in or purposely ignore the interests of social marginal groups. Ong identifies that market calculation is the most important element for a government to classify its citizenry, suggesting that a government might favor a foreign capitalist

rather than a working class national because the former might be more helpful in the national building project. As a result, graduated sovereignty as one kind of flexible strategy is formulated because a government utilizes an unequal regulatory degree of policies toward different segments of the population based on economic calculation. Therefore, even when a government defines its transmigration projects as "for the nation," it is very likely that these projects are targeted more for economic elites. As a result, different interests and conflicts between the governments and the rest of the citizenry resurface.

In general, the academic migration discourse about the social positions of governments has shifted its focus from controlled regulation to flexible regulation. Most of the current studies on flexible regulation specify how different governments actively cooperate with their migrants. These studies support my argument that governments also actively join the flexible acculturation processes, and that interactions (between governments and transmigrants) are important in these processes. Yet, because most of these studies focus on the cooperative relationship between governments and transmigrants, they do not discuss much the conflict side.

The Public: Nationals vs. Transnational Civil Society

Comparing to discussions about governments and migrants, there are relatively few about the public in migration literature, partly because the public is treated not as a major actor in a migration process, but as a motionless social group. However, the scholarship about the public in the broader transnationalism literature is richer. One important direction is that the public is no longer fixed to a certain locale (as stayers) but has become transnational. Also, this transnational public is expected to become a civil society that pays attention to the humanization rather than the commodification of social relations (Yoshikazu 2000). This public is expected to promote human rights, equity, and equality rather than self-interest, as discussed by traditional views in migration literature.

I consider the relative deprivation thesis (Grant and Brown 1995; Stark 1991; Stark, Taylor and Yitzhaki 1986, 1988) a repre-

sentative perspective of traditional views of the public in migration literature. It defines the public by situating it in a certain locale. It also treats the public not as a civil society but as a social group that pays attention to individuals or the national economic well-being. Proponents of this thesis argue that the economic well-being of emigrants augments the feelings of income inequality in the sending districts, even when the lives of people are better off than before. Such feelings of deprivation, therefore, are not caused by actual material deprivation but by feelings and symbolic interactions between emigrants and stayers. Some of these scholars argue that the material success and social privilege obtained from migration have promoted a culture of emigration. In comparison, others argue that for people who are not able to move, feelings of resentment toward emigrants emerge. There are many recent studies supporting the "resentment" argument. For example, Coronado (2003), Fouron and Glick Schiller (2001), and Myroslava (2004) show the conflicts between the stayers and overseas nationals in Haiti, Mexico, and Ukraine. The public neither sees the benefits from connecting with other locales, nor has means to access to other locales. As for the public that fashions a culture of emigration, it is still not transnational because it sees only the benefits of attaching itself to another locale rather than to multiple settings. It sees that people with connection to the outside enjoy more privileges than people without connection. Therefore, this type of public focuses on comparisons and differences but not processes of acculturation.

Academic discourse about the social position of the public in transnational moments seems to prefer the concept of "imagination," such as Arjun Appadurai's term of "the work of imagination" (1996), Michael Burawoy's "global imagination" (2000), and Christopher Smith's "geographical imagination" (1999). The most frequently-cited theorist is Appadurai (1996), who considers that the five dimensions of global cultural flows have turned the local from a subaltern field that embraced a relatively unachievable global fantasy to translocal with a collective imagination.[1] He utilizes the term "the work of imagination," which refers to a sphere

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[1] The five dimensions of global cultural flows are: ethnoscapes, mediascapes, technoscapes, financescapes, and ideoscapes.

where the local captures the global into local practices. Following Appadurai, this local imagination engages with both a cognitive mapping of global/transnational occurrences and a reexamination of social positions of states, of transmigrants, and of the local itself. Therefore, processes of imagination are processes of acculturation. Appadurai's work in 1999 has been repeatedly criticized because he held a similar view with Ortner (1994), and both celebrated the agency of people and underestimated the power of governments. Later, Appadurai corrected his position in an interview. Overall, his work is one of the earliest to define the public as a flexible actor in the era of transnationalism.

Recent theories have discussed how to turn the public into a transnational civil society and what difficulties might be in order to formulate such a civil society (Nederveen-Pieterse 2000; Yoshikazu 2000). Ong (2006:32-33) proposed a concept of "strategic sister-hood" which focuses on feminist movements and argues that, while the transnational sisterhood disseminates "[universal] democratic principles of gender equality throughout the world," it must require the "outsiders" of the South, such as Northern feminists and elite Southern counterparts, to understand "the inner spaces of com-munity" and thus "the life of the nation." She continues, "without respecting and engaging situated ethics, transnational sisterhood would have a hard time forging a 'common strategy.'[. . .] To be truly strategic, internationalist feminists must recognize and deal pragmatically with alternative ethnical imaginations of female citizenship forged within different milieus" (Ong 2006:52). This concept recognizes that because of cultural differences, the method to achieve the ultimate goal of a transnational civil society has to be flexible. The fact that the concept of strategic sisterhood recognizes structural and cultural regulations and possible conflicts within different bodies of public is what makes it differ from the earlier idea of transnational public proposed by Appadurai.

In general, studies of transnationalism have shifted the focus from a single-locale public to a transnational public and from lo-cal interests to a transnational civil society. Earlier discussions on transnational publics and the concept of imagination emphasized the power of the public to act against governmental regulations

and domestic spatial constraints. Later discussions recognize that a transnational public needs flexibility to react against not only domestic constraints but also conflicts within different public groups. In other words, acculturation processes happen not only between a public and its government, but also within different social groups in the public itself.

Im/Emigrants vs. Transmigrants

The academic focus of migrants has been changed from im/emigrants to transmigrants. The mainstream literature on "immigration" does not pay much attention to the agency of migrants because it focuses on the social integration of the host society and it expects the immigrants to blend in. This body of literature includes many approaches, such as the Chicago School, the associated assimilation approach, the melting pot thesis, and multiculturalism. The Chicago School at first included bifurcations of assimilationism: monoculturalism and the melting pot thesis. Later, the assimilation approach included multiculturalism (also called "cultural pluralism" or "differentialism") with its peak in the mid 1960s and stretching into the 1980s (Glazer and Moynihan 1963; Steinberg 1989) and then, neo-assimilationism since the late 1980s (Alba 1999; Portes and Zhou 1993). In general, agency of immigrants is not a main focus of these approaches. Rather, the major issues include how immigrants can become part of the dominant society and what assimilation patterns can be.

While there is not one particular thesis that discusses only emigration, the international migration literature is about both patterns of emigration and immigration. It includes studies that follow neoclassical macroeconomics, the dependency theory, and the New International Division of Labor from the 1960s to the 1980s. The neoclassical macroeconomics adapted Arthur Lewis's (1954) theory of a dual economy and placed its major emphasis on how functionally distributed capital and labor helped in the equalization of wages between countries and the development of modernization (Ranis and Fei 1961; Todaro 1976). On the other end of the ideological spectrum, Raul Prebisch, the Director of the United Nations Eco-

nomic Commission for Latin America, developed the dependency theory in the 1950s and offered it as a counterforce to functionalism and modernization theory on issues about development. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, in migration studies, a camp extended from this theory and argued that international economic migrations only benefited the host (usually the core) nations but not the peripheral (usually the sending) ones.[2] The following development was Fröbel, Heinrichs, and Kreye's (1980) New International Division of Labor, a concept that focused on the capitalist utilization of cheap labor and argued that capitalists obtained cheap labor not only through migration from the periphery but also within the core (Kelly 1987; Portes 1978; Sassen 1988). These scholars in the international migration literature focus on structural forces (e.g., the pull-and-push concept) and structural inequality (e.g., in the world system) but they do not pay much attention to the agency of migrants. In contrast, the transmigration literature begins to highlight agency, which is important in driving flexible acculturation processes.

Since the late 1980s, the transmigration perspective surfaces to challenge the idea of "international migration" because the latter predominantly emphasizes the unidirectional voyages of immigrants. The transmigration approach, instead, recognizes that most voyages are not single but multiple, as transmigrants often maintain ties to more than one country (Basch, Glick Schiller, and Blanc 1994). The discussions of transmigration approach start with the focus on circulatory migration and network (Portes and Walton 1981), which is about how migrants use connectedness to different localities as a strategy to maximize their economic opportunities.[3] Other scholars create diverse terms to describe agency and flexible strategies of transmigrants. These terms include transnational ethnicity (Kearney 1991), bifocal cultural consciousness (Rouse 1992), situated ethnicity (Eriksen 1993), instrumental citizenship (Rois 1992), and instrumental nationality (Tseng 1999). Most of these terms differ from previous primordial concerns in earlier dias-

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[2] I have mentioned this body of literature in the previous section on social positions of governments.

[3] This idea is in fact similar to the argument of new home economics, although agency is not the term utilized by the new home economics.

pora studies and celebrate flexible strategies of transmigrants. The claims implicit in these terms refer to transmigrants as often holding more than one citizenship, ethnicity, and/or nationality. How they represent themselves depends on which citizenship, ethnicity, and/or nationality works best for their interests in particular circumstances. While most of the concepts celebrate agency over social forces, it is worth noting that some of these terms do recognize that social forces may still over-power the transmigrants (e.g., the concept of the "neither-nor identity").

The shift of focus from discussions of im/emigrants to transmigrants shows that scholars have identified flexible strategies of migrants. The major problem of most of the transmigration studies lies in overemphasis of agency. In this light, the perspective of flexible acculturation that highlights social positions of agency is more comprehensive.

Women: The Tied Mover and the Tied Stayer

Discussions about women in the migration literature situate women in different social locations. However, most scholars agree that compared to male migrants', female migrants' social positions are greatly influenced by their families. An early migration model that includes women in the discussion is Thadani and Todaro's neo-classical economic work in 1984 that specified the distinctive traits of female migration. The study suggested that marriage is an important factor to explain female migration but not male migration. Thadani and Todaro argued that, for an unmarried woman, migration escalates the probability of marriage to a man in a capital-rich region, which is a channel to achieve social and economic upward mobility. Migration also indicates a pattern in which a married woman tends to move with her husband, who make the decision to migrate.

The new home economics model follows the tradition of neo-classical economics, suggesting that migration is a result of rational behaviors. However, rather than concentrating on individual actions, the new home economics paradigm focuses on a meso level, using family or household as the unit of analysis. The key argument of

this approach is that net family returns rather than net individual returns determine the decision to migrate. Mincer (1978), who focused on the migration of a complete household, proposed the concepts of "tied mover" and "tied stayer." A tied mover is a migrant in a situation where the moving benefits the household even though it is not optimal for that individual migrant. Conversely, a tied stayer chooses not to move for the advantage of the household, even though going away is individually profitable. Mincer and his followers (e.g., Ofek and Merrill 1997) then argue that the pattern of household migration chiefly meets the needs of a husband's labor market participation while the wife is more likely to be either a tied mover or a tied stayer.

Both Thadani and Todaro's (1984) and Mincer's (1978) work use profit maximization, not gender inequality, to explain the female migration patterns. They also inherit the deficiency in the sex-role theory, which draws on simple differences between women and men but overlooks the matter of gender relations.[4] On the other hand, feminist approaches argue that the resources of migration available to women and men are unevenly distributed. Feminist scholars recognize that in many societies, women often have fewer resources for migration. Therefore, they tend to be stayers or migrate only with their male relatives. Because of this recognition, feminists are interested not only in people who migrate but also in people who stay. In some cases, wives who stay are found to have more autonomy by taking over some tasks that once were done by their husbands. In other situations, the social position of the wives left behind might become worse because of their dependence on the remittances and the strict vigilance of their sexuality by their husbands' kin (Georges 1992; Mahler 2001).

The above discussions are framed by the international migration framework which keeps its significance in shaping some of the current studies. This framework rarely recognizes the flexibility that women can derive from migration processes. In the transmigration literature, most studies with a focus on women's flexibilities emphasize the working class women and their social movements in the Northern countries to challenge the patriarchal system in their

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[4] See Kimmel (2000, pp. 88-92) for a thorough critique of the sex-role theory.

motherlands. Scholars find that men prefer to return home because they define their social position as higher in the homeland. The male subjects in Roger Rouse's (1992) study complain that in the United States, the nation-state can interrupt the patriarchal authority of a man at home. This never happens in their homeland. Sheeri Grasmuck and Patricia Pessar's (1991) study on Dominicans reaches the same conclusion. Also, many male Mexican migrants believe that their social position is downgraded into the role of proletarian workers in the United States. In contrast to men, women define the advantages of migration (i.e. economic independence and the chance to leave patriarchal regulations) offsett the disadvantages, and therefore they tend to return for visits but not to live permanently (Hondagneu-Sotelo and Messner 1994). Georges Fouron and Nina Glick Schiller (2001) show that Haitian women in the U.S. have learned how to organize themselves politically and have created an imagination of a new Haiti that challenges the existing Haitian gender hierarchy. These studies mostly celebrate agency but somehow may let pass the significance of social structure and regulations.

A more comprehensive analysis about working class women in rich countries is provided by Parreñas (2001) who discusses both structure and agency. The subjects in Parreñas' study experienced both upward and downward mobility in the three-tiered system of caretaking among their employers, themselves, and their employees. The women are hired as domestic workers in rich countries, but, at the same time, they are able to hire other women as domestic workers in their own countries (Parreñas 2001). This analysis shows that agency and its flexible strategies might have both positive and negative effects. For instance, the flexible strategy of these women might reproduce inequality between themselves (as women in the rich countries) and the domestic workers they hire in their own countries.

Regarding middle or upper class women, households, and transnationalism, the major body of literature focuses on the formation of "astronaut families" (Aye and Guerin 2001; Ong 1992, 1999). These astronaut families have the husbands working in Hong Kong or Taiwan but keep their families in the U.S., Australia, or New Zealand, so that they can benefit from better educational environments and living standards offered by different

governments. However, these studies also acknowledge possible inflexibilities accompanying such a flexible strategy. For instance, the astronauts' wives in Ong's study (1999), who have to run their luxury houses and take care of the children alone, have mockingly named themselves "widows," which suggests that their family life is controlled and fragmented by the frequent travels and long work of their husbands. Even though some scholars show that men are also victims of such transmigration practices, most studies suggest that the flexible strategy of the family has become an imperative that requires a form of isolation and discipline of women. Mak (1991) uses the term "hostages" to describe the wives and children who have to stay in foreign countries for a certain number of years without any opportunity to visit their homelands and thus to qualify for citizenship. Therefore, while transnationalism adds to men's mobility, it does not necessarily increase the mobility of women. Even worse, the expansion of men's mobility reduces a father's connection to the family, which may simultaneously increase women's responsibility in the household (Parreñas 2005). Therefore, the dichotomy of having men connected to the ideas of "the public, mobility, and transnational sphere" versus having women connected to "the private, steady, and local field" is reinforced.

In general, most literature about women and their increased degree of flexibility in transnationalism applies to working class women who come from a Southern patriarchal society, even though there are also scholars who possess a pessimistic viewpoint. For other social groups of women, there are not many examples suggesting that women's flexibility has increased. Negative impacts on women are especially visible when flexible strategies are exercised in the name of family wellbeing and resources to achieve flexibility are unequally distributed among family members. In such a case, transnational social fields still augment flexibility of some social groups but at the expense of women's flexibility.

Conclusion

In this paper, I propose important characteristics of flexible acculturation and claim that this concept can serve as medium to make

connections between many discussions about governments, the public, transmigrants, and women in literature of transnationalism and transmigration. I recommend that further studies can continue to explore how different social actors exercise flexible strategies. In my own work (Lee 2008), I use Taiwan as the case study to explore the processes of flexible acculturation. I examine the social positions of the Taiwanese government, the businesspeople, the public, and the women on the issue of Taiwanese business relocation to China. Since processes of flexible acculturation are constructed in multiple social fields and by different social institutions, I gathered information from diverse sources (including interviews with transmigrants and their family members who were stayers, governmental documents, media reports, and discussions on public forma) in order to study processes of flexible acculturation.

Taking my discussions of the Taiwanese government as the example, I identify three flexible cultural strategies of the Taiwanese government: (1) "Governance in spatial movements" refers to the fact that the Taiwanese government utilizes controlled regulations combining with the idea of dissemNation (disseminate positive images of the nation) to watch the movements of businesses and people. (2) "Graduated sovereignty" suggests a governmental categorization of its people where the government pays attentions on the large capitalists and high-tech industries by granting more benefits *and* more regulations. (3) Some politicians' "reinvention of the Chinese identity" strategically uses several historical moments in the transnational social fields to make connections between the Chinese identity, the Taiwanese identity, and economic globalization. This strategy is to expand the flexibility of the Chinese identity in order to meet challenges from the Taiwanese subjectivity and from processes of globalization.

These examples show elements of flexible acculturation: governments and politicians are active actors in participating in the processes of acculturation. When they formulate strategies to prolong the political life, they also need to consider possible challenges (interaction) from other social groups (the government, different industrial sectors, businesspeople and their families, different ethnicities in Taiwan, etc.). In addition, how each mentioned

strategy is conducted depends on opportunities and difficulties given in the transnational social fields at different points of time. Therefore, flexible acculturation involves a set of *processes* and is about both the agency of the government and social regulations at the domestic as well as transnational levels.

The case study of Taiwan allows me to empirically present processes of flexible acculturation. It also gives me an opportunity to compare the results with other studies (e.g., I revise Aihwa Ong's idea of graduated sovereignty in order to capture the situation of Taiwan) to see how different governments might exercise flexible strategies differently. Further studies can expand the idea of flexible acculturation to different social groups so that not only empirical evidence can be established but also comparisons and differences between cases can be further discussed.

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